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ACTION ARA-01

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|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| INFO | LOG-00  | ACDA-15 | AID-01  | AMAD-01 | A-01    | CA-02  | CCO-00  |
|      | CIAE-00 | SJK-01  | CTME-00 | C-01    | DODE-00 | DS-00  | FBO-01  |
|      | HA-09   | H-01    | IMMC-01 | INRE-00 | INR-01  | L-03   | ADS-00  |
|      | M-01    | NSAE-00 | NSCE-00 | OCS-06  | OMB-01  | OPR-01 | PA-01   |
|      | PM-01   | PRS-01  | P-01    | RP-10   | SCT-03  | SNP-01 | SP-01   |
|      | SR-01   | SSC-01  | SSO-00  | SS-01   | TRSE-00 | T-01   | USIE-00 |
|      | USSS-00 |         |         |         |         |        |         |

(ONY)

-----203261 271952Z /38

P 271118Z MAR 92  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9460  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 03284

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PINR, VE  
SUBJECT: PRESS INTERVIEWS OF COUP LEADERS

3. EL UNIVERSAL ALSO PUBLISHED A SPANISH PRESS AGENCY  
(EFE) REPORT, BASED ON AN INTERVIEW BY THE CORRESPONDENT  
OF THE MADRID NEWSPAPER "EL PAIS" WITH LT. COL. CHAVEZ,  
THAT CIVILIANS WERE AWARE OF THE COMMANDERS' PLANS TO

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STAGE A COUP ON FEBRUARY 4. CHAVEZ ALLEGEDLY SAID THAT "THE HOPED-FOR UPRISING OF THE PEOPLE DURING THE COUP ATTEMPT DID NOT TAKE PLACE BECAUSE THE PLAN WAS (AS YET) NOT FULLY DEVELOPED WITH THE CIVILIANS, EVEN THOUGH (SOME) CIVILIAN SECTORS KNEW ABOUT OUR INTENTIONS." CHAVEZ ALLEGEDLY ADDED THAT THEY WERE GOING TO CALL UPON WRITER ARTURO USLAR PIETRI, LUIS RAUL MATOS AZOCAR (AD), JUAN JOSE DEL PINO (UNION LEADER) AND THE AUXILIAR BISHOP OF CARACAS, MARIO MORONTA, TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT IF THE COUP WAS SUCCESSFUL.

4. AS FOR THE PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT BY FORMER PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA, CHAVEZ SAID HIS NAME "WAS NOT EVEN MENTIONED." HOWEVER, LT. COL. ARIAS CARDENAS TOLD THE SAME CORRESPONDENT THAT CALDERA WAS ONE OF THE CIVILIANS THEY COUNTED ON TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT. ARIAS ALSO CLAIMED THAT IF THE COUP HAD SUCCEEDED, THEY WOULD HAVE APPROACHED THE IMF TO RECONSIDER THE ECONOMIC PACKAGE AND ORIENT IT TOWARDS "BENEFITTING THE PEOPLE."

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5. IN THE SAME INTERVIEW, ARIAS SAID THBBI/9| 5#3 -4.3\$ |94:3." FINALLY, CARLOS DIEZ PEREZ, ANOTHER ONE OF THE ARRESTED LT. COL.'S, ALLEGEDLY CLAIMED THAT "MINISTER OF DEFENSE OCHOA ANTICH ALWAYS INCITED US TO REBEL."

7. COMMENT: SOME OF THE REPORTED REMARKS LOOK LIKE DISINFORMATION, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR WHO IS MANIPULATING WHOM.

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|      | M-01    | NSAE-00 | NSCE-00 | OCS-06  | OMB-01  | OPR-01 | PA-01   |
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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PINR, VE  
SUBJECT: PRESS INTERVIEWS OF COUP LEADERS

REF(S): (A) CARACAS 02856 (NOTAL)  
- (B) CARACAS 02038 (NOTAL)

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1. DESPITE THE CLAIM BY PRISON AUTHORITIES THAT JOURNALISTS CANNOT VISIT OR INTERVIEW THE JAILED COUP LEADERS, BOTH EL NACIONAL AND EL UNIVERSAL ON MARCH 26 PUBLISHED EXTENSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH THEM. EL UNIVERSAL IN ITS TITLE EMPHASIZES THE COUP-PLOTTERS' DENIAL OF A FIST-FIGHT AMONG THEM (SEPTTEL). EL NACIONAL HIGHLIGHTS LT. COL. HUGO CHAVEZ'S STATEMENT REGARDING A POSSIBLE COUP ATTEMPT BY THE HIGH COMMAND OF THE ARMED FORCES. THE REPORTERS VISITED THE JAILED COMMANDERS DURING NORMAL VISITING HOURS AND NOTED THE PRESENCE OF MANY VISITING SYMPATHIZERS, INCLUDING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS CLAMORING FOR SIGNED AUTOGRAPHS OF TWO BOOKS RECENTLY PUBLISHED ABOUT THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 4.

2. THE FOLLOWING IS A SELECTION OF THE STATEMENTS BY THE COMMANDERS (MOSTLY CHAVEZ).

### COUP PLOTTING

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-- "THERE IS A HIGH PROBABILITY OF A (RIGHT-WING) MILITARY COUP ATTEMPT. A COUP BY THE HIGH COMMAND WILL  
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BE THE SAME THING. IF THIS (COUP) HAPPENS WE WILL IMMEDIATELY FIGHT IT AND ASK THE PEOPLE TO FIGHT IT" (CHAVEZ);

-- (HOWEVER) LT. COL. ARIAS CARDENAS ALLEGEDLY TOLD A REPORTER THAT A COUP BY THE HIGH COMMAND IS NOT POSSIBLE, SINCE THEY ARE DISCREDITED AND LACK THE AUTHORITY TO ORDER THE SOLDIERS TO MAKE WAR.

### OPINIONS ON THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE

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-- "WE KNOW THE PRESENT MOD VERY WELL. HE IS PART OF A CORRUPT SYSTEM. IF HE HAD ANY DIGNITY HE ALREADY WOULD HAVE RESIGNED HIS POSITION, AS SHOULD ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE HIGH COMMAND" (CHAVEZ);

-- "I AGREE WITH THE POSITION OF THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE (THAT VIOLENCE WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE COUNTRY). WITHOUT DOUBT THERE WILL BE VIOLENCE. THIS WE CANNOT DENY." (CHAVEZ).

### CONGRESSIONAL DISCUSSION

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-- "I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH THESE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS. THEY ARE A JOKE (BURLA) FOR THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE" (CHAVEZ).

CONCERNING A RECENT NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL

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-- "THE FORMATION (OF AN INTER AMERICAN MILITARY FORCE) IS POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, IF IT HAPPENS WE WILL HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ANOTHER WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, AND WE WILL FIGHT ALONG WITH THE PEOPLE, AND WITH PARA-MILITARY GROUPS. VENEZUELA IS NOT PANAMA NOR GRENADA" (CHAVEZ);

-- "THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF THE ARMED FORCES WILL JOIN US IN FIGHTING A FOREIGN INTERVENTION. AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT MOST OF THE GENERALS, WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS, WILL JOIN THE NORTH AMERICAN TROOPS." (CHAVEZ).

U.S. POLICY

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-- "THE BOLIVARIAN MOVEMENT LACKS INFORMATION ABOUT A POSSIBLE FOREIGN INTERVENTION, BUT WE NOTED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT DISPOSED TO INVADE A COUNTRY FOR (MERELY) ATTEMPTING TO GIVE ITSELF A JUST GOVERNMENT." (CHAVEZ);

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